



Parliament

Journal





Hon. Mario Philippe Losembe Batwanyele, second President of the Senate of the Democratic Republic of Congo (left) during his courtesy call to the Chairman of the National Council, Hon. Asser Kabere, on 4 March 2009.

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Cover photo:

Finance Minister, Hon. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila (second from right), shortly before tabling the 2009 national budget. She is pictured with (left to right) Mr. Mocks Shivute, PS National Planning Commission; Mr. Carl Schlettwein, PS Ministry of Finance; and Hon. Tjekero Tweya, Deputy Minister of Finance.

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From the Editor

The State of the Nation Address which is delivered annually by the President of the Republic of Namibia in Parliament is historic. This ceremonial function by the President signifies the value that Namibia attaches to good governance and democracy. President Hifikepunye Pohamba was succinct on this subject when he said: “This is in keeping with the values and ethos of accountability, transparency and good governance”.

This sentiment was corroborated by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Honourable Dr.Theo-Ben Gurirab when welcoming the President to Parliament:“We are keeping alive in this way transparent culture of political pluralism, accountability and transparency,” underlined Dr. Gurirab. Indeed these are essential virtues of democracy that Namibia needs to nurture and strengthen in all facets of society.

Parliaments are central institutions of democracy worldwide as they play an important role of strengthening democratic governance and of promoting peaceful resolution of complex problems that face different countries. It is through parliaments that the will of the people is expressed; laws are passed and governments are held to account. It is against this background that the President’s State of the Nation Address should be viewed. The President emphasized this point in his opening address when he stated that “I stand before this joint Session of our Parliament to report on the State of the Nation...”

The President of Namibia, who is elected by a popular vote, annually reports to the nation on government achievements or constraints; new development programmes and policy as well as envisaged laws that are before Parliament for debate with the aim of moving the country forward. Whereas the opening session of Parliament brings together all the three branches of the State – the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary – in a ceremonial celebration, it also denotes the essential democratic role of the three arms of government in the governance of the country.

Since Namibia is a multiparty democracy, at the end of the President’s address leaders of political parties represented in Parliament engage in a question-and-answer-session with the President. By and large, the questions from the leaders of the opposition parties would focus on the performance of the Executive branch of government and other national issues. This indeed illustrates Namibia’s democratic maturity.

At 19 years of independence, Namibia is still seen as a young democracy. However, the country has succeeded in maintaining the essential virtues of democracy such as constitutional democracy, equality before the law, national unity, gender balance, tolerance and social justice. As the country prepares for the Presidential and Parliamentary elections in November 2009, Parliament Journal wishes all the Namibian citizens a democratic and peaceful election.

President Calls for Unity As Parliament Opens

President Hifikepunye Pohamba has called for the continued maintenance of peace, national unity, security and stability for the sake of economic development. The President made the appeal as he was officially opening the 9th Session of the 4th Parliament of Namibia on 17 February 2009.

This being an election year, the President stressed the need to promote tolerance and socio-political stability in the country. It is necessary that all political activities, prior to, during, and after the elections, are carried out in a peaceful manner, he said.

The coming elections will be historic in that those born in the post-independence era will cast their votes in a general election for the very first time, President Pohamba said. He called on the youth, who had attained voting age, to register and vote in November this year. This generation which was born in liberty and had not experienced the brutality of the apartheid oppression represented a new hope and a brighter future for the country, he added.

In the knowledge that the youth could achieve all that they set their minds on, Pohamba invited them to utilize and apply their talents, skills and expertise to the betterment of the society and the promotion of national reconciliation. "Let us cherish the principle of tolerance. Let us maintain the motto of one Namibia one Nation," the President appealed.

Namibia is a diverse society where all Namibians of different political ideologies, gender, religious and racial backgrounds can make a difference and a positive contribution to the socio-economic development of our country, Pohamba underlined.



President Hifikepunye Pohamba delivering his opening speech

He added that the multiparty character of Namibia's democracy, as reflected by the presence of representatives of different political parties in parliament, was a source of strength in the country's quest to build a peaceful and democratic society - where all the citizens could realize their full potential.

This year's opening of parliament was a historic milestone reflecting the "growing strength and resilience of our democracy, the continuity of our institutions of governance; and the durability of all that we have built since the achievement of our nationhood ...," the President said.

He went on to say: "We should take pride in the fact that we have entrenched the culture of democracy in our framework of governance. This is but one of the indications that since our independence, stability and the rule of law have sunk deep roots in our country after decades of apartheid oppression."

He called on parliament to play a vital role in nation-building by enacting laws that are responsive to the needs of the people, address crucial developmental challenges and enable the people to play a positive role in taking Namibia towards Vision 2030. Apart from lawmaking, the President said, parliament has an important

constitutional function to foster accountability and transparency. He added that parliament was the heartbeat of Namibia's democracy, reflecting the will of the people through their elected representatives.

"Enhancing Public Participation in the Legislative Process" could be done in various ways, including ensuring that the Parliamentary Standing Committees, which hold public hearings in communities on pieces of legislation, were strong and fully functional, the President emphasised. He advised that such Committees had to be well-resourced in order to be able to carry out their functions effectively.

The President further called for a deliberate outreach strategy by lawmakers to ensure that the people had the possibilities of meaningful participation in the law making process. He described as equally important the promotion of a culture and orientation towards democracy among Namibia's school children and the youth. He was thus happy that lawmakers were fully engaged in promoting the activities of the Children's Parliament to create an understanding of the democratic process amongst school children as well as groom future leaders.

President Pohamba was happy with the fact that women are taking their place

at the leadership levels and are able to play different roles which had previously been reserved for men. He stressed: "We have made notable progress towards meeting our commitment to increase women participation in decision making. For instance, Namibia is among the top three countries to have exceeded the 30 percent target set by the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, as we now have 31 percent of representation of women in politics and decision-making. I believe that more should be done to achieve the 50 percent goal set by the African Union for women representation in political, economic and cultural decision-making by 2015."

Namibia is making steady progress in that at the level of local government, the country leads the SADC Region with 45 percent women representation. This achievement highlights "our commitment to build a fairer society, where all citizens have equal opportunities, regardless of gender, race, social status or other socially constructed attributes."

The President said that it is "just as good that our parliament and our local government authorities are leading the way to empowering Namibian women. Other institutions, including the private sector must surely follow these worthy examples." No section of the population should feel excluded from this national duty and privilege to serve the nation, the President added.

President Pohamba expressed the conviction that during this session the lawmakers would work just as hard, if not harder. "During this time of tough economic challenges, the creativity and wisdom of our lawmakers is needed to find solutions to the developmental challenges facing our country and all her people," the President said.

"The nation is looking up to the lawmakers to enact innovative pieces of legislation aimed at tackling and addressing issues which affect our people's daily lives, ranging from combating unemployment, violence against women and children, food production and the plight of the vulnerable members of our society. They are looking up to this institution to engender a new sense of hope and optimism so that our country

can weather the storm and emerge stronger from the current economic down turn."

The President called upon lawmakers to join hands for the benefit of the people; to make maximum contribution to all the debates; to consider deeply, vigorously and sincerely all the issues tabled for discussion and debate; and to ensure that they were informed by the need to promote and advance the interests of the Namibian people.

"Your foremost preoccupation as elected representatives is to do your best in order to carry out the mandate bestowed on you by the electorate. This calls for dedication to duty, exemplary leadership and patriotic zeal for the work that you do... we expect vigorous debate on these important pieces of legislation as they will have an impact on the lives of our people," President Pohamba said.

Several Bills will be tabled during the 9th session. The Correctional Services Bill, the President observed, would impact the lives of those serving prison sentences, including their possible rehabilitation to become useful citizens upon release. The Telecommunications Bill, on the other hand, could have far-reaching effects regarding the development

of the telecommunications sector in the country as well as Namibia's competitiveness in the regional and global economies.

Similarly, the Tobacco Products Control Bill is a crucial piece of legislation because of the danger that smoking posed to the health of the people. After all, Namibia's health system is under strain of various diseases including the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis.

The President was confident that this session will be productive in all respects, and that the Namibian people will see for themselves and experience the positive impacts that will result from the implementation of new laws that will emanate from our Parliament.

The Head of State congratulated the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on his October 2008 election as President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). This, he said, is an opportunity for Dr. Gurirab to contribute towards international mutual understanding and tolerance among the people of the world. ■



Various cultural groups entertained guests before President Hifikepune Pohamba officially opened Parliament

Committee Discuss Security Sector Governance

The National Council Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security organised a five-day sensitisation workshop on Legislative Oversight of the Security Sector, held at Swakopmund from 2-6 February 2009. The purpose of the workshop was, among other things, to expand the knowledge base of legislators to enable them to play an increasingly active role in overseeing defence and security issues.

Specifically the workshop aimed at enhancing the lines of communication between legislators and senior security sector leadership (defence, police, intelligence, correctional services, foreign affairs, immigration and others); promoting information sharing by elected civilian leaders about structures, initiatives and practices



Workshop participants in group discussions

related to Security Sector Governance; producing a series of recommendations to strengthen the security sector relations – especially civil-military relations that participants could take back to their respective institutions for continued debate, discussion and implementation.

The workshop discussions focused mainly on security sector governance and relations; the role of the legislator in strengthening these relations; policy formulation and strategic direction of the security sector; and mechanisms for accountability and transparency. The workshop brought together stakeholders from the security sectors such as the Legislature, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Safety and Security, the Namibia Central Intelligence Service and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Enforce Better Security Policies, Urges Governor

The workshop on Legislative Oversight of the Security Sector which aims at enhancing the understanding of Parliamentary oversight and the legal framework to exercise scrutiny of the security sector was important to ensure harmony of operations among all the stakeholders. This was said by the Erongo Regional Governor, Honourable Samuel Nuuyoma when he officially opened the Sensitisation Workshop of the National Council Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security held in Swakopmund.



Governor Samuel Nuuyoma

Nuuyoma said improving the security of citizens was a priority on the agenda of any country. "Too many countries around the world have taken the issue of defence and security for granted over the years, and are now struggling to keep and maintain peace and stability. I therefore applaud the National Council Standing Committee (on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security) for organising a workshop of this kind. The country is faced with numerous security challenges such as violence against women and children, murders, among others. Citizens are appealing for help from lawmakers to come up with a solution. It is only through collaboration with line Ministries, Offices, Agencies and the

Standing Committee that we can enforce better safety and security policies."

The Governor said Namibia continued to live peacefully with its neighbours and continued to interact with the outside world to ensure security and prosperity of its citizens. "Namibia has participated in the United Nations peacekeeping operations. This has contributed to peace in the world and improved Namibia's international standing among nations of the world. I am also happy that Namibia is working hard to improve cooperation with its neighbours and other partners abroad in combating cross-border threats such as terrorism, crimes, drug

trafficking and arms proliferation," he emphasized.

Nuuyoma said there were many security challenges in Africa and Namibia was no exception. "Violent conflicts are a greatest threat. Wars are crippling resources and destabilizing countries. It is imperative for Africa to be integrated into the global economy and ensure that globalization benefit Africa and not marginalize the continent." The Governor urged workshop participants to use the opportunity to come up with resolutions that would assist them improve their work for the wellbeing of all Namibians. ■■■■■

Security Central to People's Well-Being, Says Hakaye

The Chairperson of the National Council Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, Honourable Jhonny Haikella Hakaye said the sensitisation workshop on Legislative Oversight of the Security Sector would inform all stakeholders in the sector of workable ways and means to best serve the people. Hakaye said this when he was outlining the five-day workshop's objectives at Swakopmund.

"I am greatly honoured to have been given the responsibility to convene this historic workshop that brings under one roof Members of Parliament and line Ministries that had been entrusted with Defence, Security and Foreign Policy of the Republic of Namibia. As you might be aware, a country's foreign policy is linked to the safety and security of that nation. Development cannot take place in a country where there is insecurity. Therefore, it is



Honourable Jhonny Haikella Hakaye

important for us politicians to ensure that peace and security is maintained at all times. For this reason, it is important for Members of Parliament to understand the role of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security in the country. This will in turn help us to debate in an informed manner when it comes to appropriation of funds to

the security sector and supporting our foreign agenda," he underlined.

Hakaye informed the participants that the workshop would create an understanding among line Ministries dealing with Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security thereby opening lines of communication and mutual inclusion.

“Such exchanges are important as they ensure trust among politicians, technocracy and the military, thus helping to consolidate stability in the country.”

He reminded the participants about the importance of security. “We all agree that security is central to people’s well-being. Therefore, there is need for people’s elected representatives in parliament to work closely with line Ministries on defence and security issues. I am happy to see that one of the critical issues covered in this workshop is the budgeting principles. It is very important for Members of Parliament to work closely with the line Ministries of Defence and Security during the preparation of the budget. Parliamentarians can contribute to the process through different formal and informal mechanisms so that when the budget is debated in Parliament, we

are able to defend it in an informed manner.”

The Standing Committee Chairperson was of the view that the security sector was ready to ensure peace and stability in Namibia during the 2010 World Cup and the African Nations Cup that would be held in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Region. “These two big sports events have potential to cause insecurity, not only in South Africa and Angola where they will take place, but in Namibia as well. Therefore it is important that Namibia’s foreign security obligations are coordinated with our neighbours to ensure security in our region and beyond,” he stressed.

Hakaye concluded by reminding workshop participants that: “We are here to learn best practices on Parliamentary oversight of the security

sector. It is my sincere hope and wish that what will be shared in this workshop will form part of our annual work plans. We all agree that the stability in any country depends on the judicious management of the security sector. In this regard, it is our duty as Parliamentarians and stakeholders in defence and security to effectively perform our oversight function over the security sector. However, this can successfully be realized through undertaking workshops of this type and the exchange of information as well as keeping Members of Parliament abreast with developments in Namibia’s Foreign, Defence and Security sectors. It is my sincere belief that this workshop will serve as a launching pad for close working relationship between Parliament and line ministries charged with the security of our people’s lives and properties”.



Presidential Guards during the opening of parliament

Dr. Gurirab Addresses Polytechnic Students

The Speaker of the National Assembly Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab has described students and staff of the Polytechnic of Namibia as the country's future accountants, engineers, scientists and entrepreneurs to whom the batons of business, civic, social and political leadership would gradually be passed. Dr. Gurirab made this observation when he was addressing lecturers and students during the 14th Annual Academic opening of Namibia's University of Technology on 11 February 2009.

Dr. Gurirab, who is also President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) since October 2008, said: "Apart from being our future accountants, engineers, scientists, entrepreneurs, you are also the ones to whom the batons of business, civic, social and political leadership at all levels will gradually pass. You will be the ones on who will fall the task of continuing our endeavours to craft a better life for all Namibians, and of cementing Namibia's place in the global community of nations. On your shoulders will rest the responsibility of preserving and enhancing the social, political, economic and moral fabric of our society."

He praised the Polytechnic for being rated as the 16th best university in Africa which, he said, placed the institution ahead of dozens of long-established and reputable East, West, North and Southern African universities. "What an achievement this is, coming just 13 years after the Polytechnic's inception in 1996! It comes barely two months after the



Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab

news that Polytechnic has just won its 6th PMR Golden Arrow Award as the best tertiary institution in Namibia," hailed Dr. Gurirab.

Congratulating the council, the rector, faculty officers and staff for the outstanding achievements, Dr. Gurirab said: "Your achievements are a credit to Namibia and due recognition for your diligence and the visionary leadership the institution enjoys. I salute you." Reflecting on this year's theme – Wealth Creation for the New Economy – Dr. Gurirab said it was appropriate in view of the ambitious development agenda that Namibia had set itself in Vision 2030 and the challenges that the country faced in reaching its objectives. "There is an urgent need for Namibia and other developing countries in Africa and

elsewhere to reduce their reliance on expanding industrial production capacity and on the exploitation of their natural resources. In Namibia, the recent closure of several mines and reports of the possible loss of hundreds of jobs at a fish processing company have confirm economists' critical stance against global markets and the destruction they can wreak on economies still based on the traditional industrial model. Mindsets must change," Dr. Gurirab cautioned.

According to Dr. Gurirab, since the Polytechnic's establishment in 1996, government had provided hundreds of millions of Namibian dollars in subsidies for infrastructure and equipment, in operational support, and in student financial assistance, advising the students to be grateful for that service.



He said the Polytechnic was fast gaining local, regional and international recognition for quality, innovation and good governance, and had become a recognised trend-setter in the region. He added: “You have worked hard and have been fortunate to gain a place here. I want to encourage you to take full advantage of the opportunity you have. Do not study only to pass your exams in order to obtain your career objectives. Develop your capacity to be creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial.”

Dr. Gurirab described a university as a place where diversity and differences must be encouraged and not suppressed. “It (university) should be the bedrock of dialogue and the cultivation of mutual understanding and appreciation for differences, whether cultural, political, historical, or whatever. At the same time, it should also be a fertile seedbed for spreading tolerance in society. In this regard the role of a university cannot be (under)-estimated. Use your time here to get to know and appreciate others. Appreciate others' uniqueness, respect their differences and take that appreciation,” he concluded.



A large number of Polytechnic students turned up for the annual academic opening which was addressed by Dr. Gurirab



Finance Minister Tables National Budget

On 19 March 2009 the Minister of Finance Honourable Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila introduced government's N\$25, 5 billion national budget in the National Assembly. The Minister spelt the priorities for the budget as being, among others, to improve the social safety net to relieve poverty, particularly in rural areas; foster human resource development, through better health and education; and to invest in improving competitiveness and promoting growth with new jobs.

The Minister emphasised that budget interventions has succeeded in being pro-poor/pro-growth in that government has substantially increased

the old-age grants by 21.6 percent to N\$450 per month and improved coverage to about 90 percent of the target group. In addition, Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) grants has increased with an additional 10,489 children benefitting. The school feeding programme was also expanded and was destined to be boosted further under this year's budget.

She said since 1st April 2008, close to 2000 war veterans have been covered under the veteran's grant scheme and, as registration progresses, more veterans would benefit. The Emergency Management Unit (EMU) had made it possible to provide relief to vulnerable people affected by natural disasters. Government, she said, had availed additional funds to the Ministry of Education to allow for Grade 10 learners in the 2008/09 financial year to repeat subjects. As a result, a total of 16,740 learners have benefitted under this scheme. With an increase in allocations to the Students Financial Assistance Fund in 2008/09, an additional 2,251 students were enabled to study at tertiary institution, with particular consideration for natural and applied sciences subjects.

According to the Minister, an increased funding to the National Youth Service enabled 900 youths to receive skills training in 2008/09. The growth in health expenditure has enabled government to enhance the roll out of anti-retroviral (ARVs). A modern cardiac unit has become operational and upgrading of health infrastructures was also undertaken.

The current Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) provides N\$ 610 million to NamPower to address power shortages. This was to accelerate both transmission and generation projects in order to guarantee continuous and affordable power supply. The projects in the energy sector have also attracted significant private sector interest, demonstrating the catalytic role played by public funding.

Similarly, she pointed out, water infrastructure development, including both rural water supply and supply to the industry, is subject of growing cooperation with diversified stakeholders.



Finance Minister Kuugongelwa-Amadhila presenting the 2009 national budget

Speaker Launches Publications On Democracy

The Speaker of the National Assembly in conjunction with the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID) launched political books on democracy and governance. Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab officiated at this important event at the old Cabinet Chambers.

“The establishment of representative institutions and management structures to support democracy and the rule of law highlights both new opportunities as well as challenges, which call for commitment to the strengthening of Namibia's multi-party political system. While considerable progress has been made in Namibia towards enhancing and reinvigorating such institutions, regular and sustained efforts need to be buttressed to ensure productive functioning of accountable structures vis-à-vis the electorate. Oversight responsibility and participation of the electorate in governance are vital at all levels of public administration,” said Dr. Gurirab.

The Speaker said Parliament has been pro-active in following through on constituency outreach, investing time, energy and resources into enhancing these efforts. This is being aided by information technology, assigning Parliamentary staff to interact with the NID in strengthening the outreach capabilities of Parliamentary committees. These efforts are providing space in Parliament for community organizations and the media, thereby increasing the number of Parliamentary field visits in their individual capacities and as members of committees.

Parliament has collaborated with the NID since 2001 in work that had placed

special emphasis on strengthening parliamentary constituency outreach capacity. This launch was part of the NID's annual networking conference, where they invite members of civil society organisations (CSO) from all regions in the country that are part of the NID's civil society network. This was the third networking conference where citizens could interact with authorities such as Parliament and other selected government Institutions. Citizens had the chance to talk face-to-face with their elected representatives, whom they usually only know from newspapers, radio or television. Members of CSO also had the chance to ask their leaders questions which would hopefully find answers to improving the social issues in their respective regions. This conference, however, was also a tool for government to receive positive feedback on the work done in the regions.

The five publications were funded by the United State Agency for International Development (USAID) that had supported the government for 13 years to implement its democracy and governance programme which ended in June last year. The training manuals and information booklets launched are: the Parliamentary Committee Quick Reference Guide; Parliamentary Reporters' Handbook; Guide to the Namibian Budget; Strengthening Political Parties; and the Regional

Council and Constituency Handbook.

USAID/Namibia Mission Director Mr. Gregory Gottlieb said it was critical for the nation's leadership to continue to promote a vibrant, tolerant and open democracy. The United States Government has been proud of supporting the efforts and the launch of the manuals illustrated the ongoing fruits of this successful partnership. It is our hope that these publications would be widely distributed and used, and that they would become an integral part of civil society activities throughout Namibia and further promote and strengthen the country's democratic institutions. The manuals are key resources and powerful tools to inform and train community leaders, the media, parliamentary staff, Namibian citizens and the future leaders of the country regarding Namibia's democratic institutions and effective democracy and governance practices.

The Mission Director assured that the United States Government remained committed to further development of institutions and practices in Namibia, adding that continued progress on democracy and governance would reinforce the effectiveness and durability of the government's efforts in health care, economic development and education. The publications can be obtained at the NID's offices and Parliament.



Five publications which were launched by Speaker Gurirab

Camera Eye on this Quarter at Parliament



The World Health Organisation's (WHO) Regional Director for Africa Dr. Luis Sambo (right), accompanied by the Minister of Health and Social Services, Dr. Richard Nchabi Kamwi (left), paid a courtesy call on the Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab (centre), on 25 February 2009.

Mr. Ian MacLeod (left), UNICEF's Representative in Namibia, paid a courtesy call on the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab on 24 February 2009.



Student leaders from the University of Namibia (UNAM) paid a courtesy call on the Vice-Chairperson of the National Council, Hon. Margaret Mensah-Williams in March 2009. The students also toured the Chamber of the National Council during the courtesy call which aimed at finding out how Namibia's parliamentary system operates.

Outgoing Brazilian Ambassador to Namibia Mr. Marcio Aracijo Lage (left) bidding farewell to the Chairman of the National Council Hon. Asser Kapere, in February 2009.



A UNAM student poses a question in the National Council Chamber during a courtesy call on the Vice-Chairperson in March this year.

Heads of the legislature and the judiciary (left to right): Speaker of the National Assembly Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab; Chairman of the National Council Hon. Asser Kapere; and Chief Justice Mr. Peter Shivute before the official opening of parliament 2009.



Camera Eye on this Quarter at Parliament



Professor Nico Horn (left) and Dr. Anton Bösl (centre), the KAS Country Representative, with the Speaker of the National Assembly Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab at the signing of an agreement for the UNAM Certificate Course "Parliament Practice and Conduct Programme" for the members of the Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs of the National Assembly - funded by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS).

Heads of the Legislature and the Executive: (left to right): Chairman of the National Council Hon. Asser Kapere; President Hifikepunye Pohamba and the Speaker of the National Assembly Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab before the official opening of parliament 2009.



Chiefs of uniformed services (left to right): Chief of the Namibian Defence Force, Lt-General Martin Shalli; Inspector-General of Namibian Police, Lt-General Sebastian Ndeitunga; and the Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. Evaristus Shikongo at the official opening of parliament 2009.

Learners from primary and secondary schools in and around Windhoek lined up for the official opening of parliament.



President Hifikepunye Pohamba inspects the Guard of Honour before he officially opened the 9th Session of the 4th parliament 2009.

Part of Windhoek's primary school learners who braced the cloudy weather and lined up for the official opening of parliament.



Parliamentary Staff Share Experiences

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Uganda Branch hosted a three-day Parliamentary Staff Development Workshop in Kampala from 2-4 February 2009. The workshop, initiated by the CPA Secretariat, aimed at strengthening the capacity of parliamentary staff in the Africa Region. Participants were drawn from different CPA branches across the Africa Region. Approximately 35 Clerks of Parliament and researchers attended the workshop.

The Clerk of the Ugandan Parliament, Mr. Aeneas Medrate Tandekwire, opened the workshop and welcomed the participants. He said the overwhelming participation of different Parliaments in the workshop symbolized the commitment to ensuring that all Parliaments on the African continent could work together towards establishing democratic and well-governed societies which respected and observed the institutions of Parliament.

The Ugandan Clerk of Parliament shared with the participants the experience with regard to the functions, needs, organization and operational structures of his country's parliamentary committees. He described committees as the basic working component of a legislature. Given the complexity and magnitude of the subject matters contained in numerous bills, motions, reports that were introduced in the House, he cautioned, it was virtually impossible for each legislator to effectively participate in all deliberations of the House.

Tandekwire said the entire House would not do justice to bills tabled if it attempted to consider each of them in detail, hence the need for committees. He considered committees to be

an entry point where the public was afforded the opportunity to put across their views to the government on the proposed policy or law. He further stressed that the majority of the quality outputs of any Parliament were systematically and comprehensively processed through Committees.

According to Tandekwire, research had shown that the executive did take seriously recommendations proposed by committee than otherwise. It was believed that when Committees did sub-standard work, the output of the Parliament was most likely to be substandard. He stressed that Parliament without Committee was simply not an institution to talk about.

Mr. Tandekwire believed that the leadership of committee was one of the most important elements in the effective operations of the committee. He said the committee chairperson embodied the vision of the committee and he/she could kill a committee or make it vibrant. Due to the fact that the appointment of members of a committee was determined by a country's political and legal imperatives, there was tendency for various committee members to want to report to their parties on the progress, strategies and road map of committee operations. They tend to forget that they have been appointed by Parliament and should be accountable to Parliament.

He argued that committee members should be answerable to the people they represented and should closely monitor the developments and policies of government to be able to maximize the opportunities that exist for the people they represent. The ideal situation, he advised, was for committee members to leave behind their party cards and colours right at the entrance of the committee meetings.

Because of the temporary nature of membership of committees, he said, committee members do not develop expertise in the sectors they supervise. In order for them to be effective,

there was a need to have a competent, professional and non-partisan secretariat support. We have noticed that politicians come and go after every election and their gap is usually filled by what Mr. Tandekwire referred to as *unsung heroes* (the committee clerk). The committee clerks shouldered many administrative, procedural and analytical responsibilities. They are the mover of things behind the curtains. In order to effectively provide administrative and procedural support to committee, the clerk should have a high level of analytical skills. Sometimes, a clerk works in a highly politically charged environment. In spite of this, he/she is supposed to remain cool, loyal, obedient, non-partisan, and professional and maintain integrity.

The Principal Clerk of Parliament of Ghana, Mr. C. Amevor, indicated that with the increasing democratization process in Africa, the oversight role of Parliament was crucial in sustaining the process. He concurred with Mr. Tandekwire that Parliament open and close, and that Parliamentarians come and go, depending on their electoral fortunes. It could be argued that Parliament is only as effective as its professional parliamentary administration, he stressed. He further said that effective parliamentary oversight of the executive and the judiciary was, to a large extent, necessarily a function of the quality of parliamentary administration.

Parliamentary oversight over other arms of government operationalises the principles of accountability, transparency and participation which were at the core of democratic control. Mr. Amevor argued further that the extent to which Parliament was able to employ parliamentary tools for the purpose of influencing the government's options would depend not only on the provisions of the Constitution (legal authority), but also on the ability and attitude of Parliament. Ability related to the capacity of Parliament to hold government accountable over its actions and inactions depending on the resources available to the Parliament.

The other condition for effective parliamentary oversight is the attitude, or the political will, of Parliament towards oversight over the other arms of government. Even when and where the constitutional authority and the resources and expertise exist, oversight would be problematic if Parliamentarians lacked the will to fully and effectively employ and deploy the tools of oversight at their disposal.

Mr. Amevor suggested that parliamentary capacity building should be factored into the overall strategic plans of Parliament. Necessary training should be provided for parliamentary staff to enable them to provide professional support service to members of Parliament. He further

suggested that institutional linkages between parliamentary administration and civil societies and international institutions should be enhanced. Parliamentary internship, recruitment of young graduates conducting research for the relevant oversight agencies must be encouraged.

Mr. David Broom, Director of Administration and Finance at CPA Secretariat, thanked the Parliament of Uganda for accepting the offer to host the workshop. He expressed his excitement in the manner in which participants shared experiences from their different backgrounds. He said that more staff development workshops would be organised in an attempt to build the capacity of

Parliaments, especially in the Africa Region.

Concluding the workshop, Mr. Tandekwire thanked the CPA for choosing Uganda as the host of the workshop. He disclosed that Uganda was planning to establish a fully-fledged Parliamentary Training Centre that he hoped would be the first in Africa where workshops of this nature would be hosted. He urged participants to establish networking with colleagues in other Parliaments.

Staff from the National Assembly, Mr. Albius Mutonga, Senior Parliamentary Clerk, and Mr. Michael Muondjo, Information Officer attended the workshop.



Participants in the Parliamentary Staff development Workshop in a plenary session.

Group photo of participants



HIV/AIDS and SADC: How are We Doing?

David R. Patient (MHT)
and Neil M. Orr (MA)

Introduction

HIV and AIDS has inflicted the “single greatest reversal in human development” in modern history (UNDP 2005, quoted in the UNAIDS 2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic). In this short article, the key points of impact in the SADC region are described, and also areas of success and failure.

The SADC region is without doubt the epicentre of the AIDS pandemic in the world: Prevalence rates vary from 15 percent to 28 percent of the population. In 2007, sub-Saharan Africa – primarily SADC countries – was home to 67 percent (22.1 million) of all people living with HIV in the world. Of these, 60 percent are women. Almost half (45 percent) of those infected are between the ages of 15 and 24. Ninety percent of children living with HIV in the world today are in sub-Saharan Africa.

The impact of HIV/AIDS

What has AIDS done to our societies? The scope of the impact of HIV and AIDS in SADC countries is profound: Reduction of the average adult life span by more than 20 years; Creation of millions of child-headed households; Deepening of poverty; Reduction in economic output; Increasing resource disparities between rural and urban populations; Reversal of educational progress; Alteration of agricultural output types and production levels; Deaths of young adults. This list is by no means complete.

On the other hand, HIV and AIDS have resulted in equally unprecedented efforts to deal with the multitude of social and infrastructural problems and inequities in our societies. Extraordinary efforts have been made to ensure universal access to ART (antiretroviral treatment), resulting in a slowing down of the deaths from AIDS over the last few years; Gender equity programmes to address vulnerability of women; PMTCT (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission) programmes have produced remarkable results in reducing infections in newborns.

It is now possible to state – tentatively, and with conditions – that HIV is no longer a death sentence. In those areas and populations with access to the ART and PMTCT and related infrastructure, the life expectancy of a person living with HIV now exceeds the life expectancy of a person with diabetes. Considering the context of the time-span in which this has occurred – 25 years – this is indeed cause for quiet celebration. However, this is a single battle victory in a much larger war against the scourge of our times, and other battles are by no means won. Indeed, it may be argued that we may be winning the war in treatment, and losing the larger war of prevention.

Measuring our efforts

Theoretically, we may measure our combined efforts – prevention and treatment access – by examining national and regional HIV prevalence rates. Essentially, the prevalence for a specific period is the previous year’s total prevalence, plus new infections, and minus AIDS deaths. When HIV prevalence rates stabilise – that is, do not increase or decrease significantly – this simply means that new infections and AIDS deaths are equal.

If the total prevalence rate increases, this means one of two things: either new infection have increased faster than AIDS deaths, or more people requiring ART (antiretroviral) are receiving such life-saving treatment, compared to new infections. Conversely, a drop in total prevalence means one of two things: either more people are dying from AIDS than those

newly infected, or there are fewer new infections compared to AIDS deaths.

In many SADC countries, the total prevalence is stabilising. The question is whether this is due to successful prevention programmes, or AIDS deaths increasing to match new infections.

There is no doubt that there have been significant successes in making ART available to more people, thus reducing AIDS deaths. However, the evidence suggests that the need for ART is currently outpacing its’ availability, meaning that AIDS deaths are still a major factor in determining total prevalence rates. Ironically, if everyone who needed ART was receiving such treatment, the total prevalence rates should increase, not decrease, as the total pool of infected people was not decimated through death, and only newly infected people were added to the total.

We need to keep in mind that HIV/AIDS is a “slow wave” pandemic: It takes between 6 and 8 years from infection until AIDS symptoms develop, and a further 1 to 2 years for death from AIDS to occur, in the absence of ART. Furthermore, infection rates were doubling every 18 to 24 months in the previous decade. The end-result is that, despite massive efforts to provide ART to as many people as possible, these efforts would need to double such access every 18 to 24 months. If this does not occur, AIDS deaths will outpace ART access. This appears to be the case, currently.

What about prevention? The key variable in assessing prevention efforts is new infections per annum. Other key indicators are birth rates and STI (Sexually Transmitted Infections) figures. If standard ABC (Abstinence, Be faithful, Condomise) prevention programmes are working, then all three statistics should logically decline. The evidence suggests otherwise: For every two people who start ART, there are five new infections (UNAIDS, 2008); furthermore: “There is also no evidence ... that HIV prevalence is decreasing in the sub-region. In 2005

there were 1,5 (1,3 -1,7) million new HIV infections in the SADC Region representing more than 36.5 percent of all new infections globally” (SADC Report: Expert think tank meeting on HIV prevention on high-prevalence on Southern Africa, 2006). It appears, despite the most strenuous efforts, that the ABC prevention model has not been the success we hoped for. It also needs to be noted that public messaging has not yet fully resolved the conflict between the “prevent infection because AIDS can kill you” message and the get tested and treated – you can live a long life’ message.

Prevention: The Long War

There have been significant changes in the epidemiological nature of HIV in the SADC region: For example, commercial sex workers are no longer primary vectors of infection. In many locations, the prevalence rate of commercial sex workers is not significantly different from married and unmarried women in the same area. Commercial sex workers are also more likely to use condoms than other women of the same age. It is also the case that the primary focus of infection has shifted to “ordinary” committed relationships; in other words, the days of focusing upon “high risk sex with strangers” has passed. Instead, the focus is now on married couples, and couples who have long-term relationships. For example, it has been found that the probability of a man wearing a condom is 60 percent if he is having sex with a stranger, 30 percent if it is a regular girl friend and only 10 percent if it is his wife. This means that people are generally aware of the risk of casual sex, and know how to reduce the risks.

For many years we – HIV/AIDS educators – blamed the failure of prevention efforts on the lack of knowledge regarding prevention (typically ABC), or lack of access to condoms. However, various studies have indicated that most adults – in excess of 90 percent - are well aware of how HIV is transmitted, and how to prevent it. What was not taken into consideration in our prevention efforts is the basic cultural imperative to reproduce children. In our experience,

the need to reproduce children overrides knowledge of the individual risks regarding HIV. Until this conflict is resolved – having children versus protecting yourself – prevention efforts will produce poor results.

In this regard, there is a glimmer of hope. Recent studies have indicated that sero-discordant couples (one HIV-positive, the other HIV-negative) may safely conceive sexually if the person living with HIV has an undetectable viral load, no untreated STI’s, and is under medical supervision. The implications of these findings have yet to be explored in terms of public messaging.

There have also been significant research findings that may change the course of regional and local prevention efforts. The fact that (medical) circumcision can reduce the chances of a man becoming HIV-infected by up to 60 percent; sociological studies that have determined that the presence of concurrent relationships (more than one sexual relationship – often long-term – occurring simultaneously) is a key factor in variations in HIV prevalence. Furthermore, there is emerging evidence that poverty and resource-related issues (clean water, access to medical care, nutrition) cause differences in vulnerability to HIV infection, and also speed of progression to AIDS.

Given the lack lustre outcomes from conventional ABC prevention

programmes, these new developments provide new avenues to bolster prevention strategies. Under consideration in some countries is incentivised male circumcision, and circumcision at birth, as is the case in the USA. Concurrent relationships also provide a focus for relationship-based programmes emphasising monogamy. The latter was successfully employed in Uganda in the late 1980’s (Zero Grazing).

The road forward

A review of major global pandemics – such as the Black Death and Bubonic Plagues, as examples – shows that pandemics change the core values of societies. In the 25 years that HIV has been recorded, the pandemic has outpaced our willingness and ability to change. The price of inflexibility has been enormous, and even if a cure was found today, we would continue to pay the price for generations.

However, both sociological and medical understanding of HIV and AIDS is maturing. We are finally coming to grips with the real social forces that are driving the pandemic, and the next five years will see a major reorientation of prevention methodology towards circumcision and the reduction of concurrent relationships. It is particularly the latter that will force societies to discuss the widespread phenomena of what is essentially open-ended polygamy based upon economic factors. We fully expect prevention efforts to shift from



Delegates from Namibia, Mozambique and Tanzania who attended the workshop

the conventional ABC to focus upon monogamy, with condom promotion becoming a secondary strategy. In terms of treatment access, there is no doubt that this will be systematically expanded, and treatment outcomes improved. However, one of the key issues confronting our medical infrastructure is nonadherence – a behavioural issue – which has led to the current situation where almost 1 in 5 new infections being drug-resistant, potentially creating a scenario similar to drug-resistant TB. If this issue is not addressed with urgency, the respite in deaths from AIDS may fade within a few short years.

Effective prevention is – and should be – the ultimate goal in any HIV/AIDS strategy. SADC countries cannot indefinitely bear the costs of having large segments of the population on life-long chronic medication. Yes, it is cheaper to treat than not to treat. However, it is even cheaper – economically – to prevent, if we are willing to pay the psychological and cultural price for the necessary changes.

The opinions in this article reflect those of the authors based on their combined experiences. David Patient – a person living with HIV for 26 years; and Neil Orr, a research Psychologist in the area of health - have worked in HIV/AIDS, since 1983 and 1985, respectively, with the last 15 years working in 17 countries in Africa, India and South East Asia. On 23-27 March 2009 they conducted a conference on HIV and AIDS in Windhoek which was attended by delegates from Southern African countries.

They are best-selling authors of Positive Health (17 million copies in circulation in 19 languages) and Choices: All about HIV and AIDS (Jacana, 2008), trainers, facilitators and program designers. Their work has covered many aspects of health and HIV/AIDS, from regional NGO's to whole country interventions.

For more information on the authors and the scope of their work, please visit <http://empow.co.za> or email David Patient on david@empow.co.za

India to Continue Helping Namibia Through ITEC Programme

The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) and the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme (SCAAP) have been operating in Namibia since independence in 1990. Some staff members of Parliament are amongst the 450 Namibians who have so far benefited from the programme. According to the Indian High Commissioner to Namibia, His Excellency Tsewang Topden, India was committed towards assisting Namibia in bridging the developmental gap under the south-south cooperation. The High Commissioner added that his country was ready to extend significant cooperation to Namibia in the areas of human resource development and capacity building in line with Namibia's Vision 2030. He said the Indian Government had been addressing Namibia's developmental needs under the ITEC and other programmes. The ITEC/SCAAP Programme has five components, namely:

- training in India of nominees of an ITEC partner country;
- projects and project-related activities, such as feasibility studies and consultancy services;
- deputation of Indian experts abroad;
- study tours; and
- aid for disaster relief

Twelve staff members from the Parliament of Namibia have benefited thus far from the ITEC training and study programmes in the following fields:

- Parliamentary Internship Programme for foreign beneficiaries
- Parliamentary Officials, International Training Programme in Legislative Drafting
- Office Tools and E-commerce
- Graphic Design and Multimedia
- Software Techniques and Networking

At the same occasion, the patron of the Alumni and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Marco Hausiku thanked the Indian Government for providing the ITEC programme that had assisted in fostering mutual understanding between the peoples of India and other countries through the exchange of persons, knowledge and skills. He cited his experience of how advanced India was in Information Communication Technology (ICT), especially in the medical field, where doctors in a theatre in one state of India are able to consult others in the theatre in a different state on how to carry out an operation. He further reminded the beneficiaries of the programmes that they were “helping to shape our society in your own unique and meaningful way. From the moment you enrolled as an ITEC student, you became part of the Alumni Association, and you remain so today. You now have an even more crucial role to play as you move on in life in the continuing pursuit of your aspirations. Society looks to you for answers to social and economic challenges. I urge you to give back to society, by sharing new experiences and challenges,” Minister Hausiku emphasised.



Namibia stands a better chance to benefit from learning the French language in terms of interacting at international conferences, conducting peacekeeping operations with other African contingents, expanding and winning potential markets and expanding the opportunities to study abroad or by just winning new friends and the ways of communicating with them. The French Ambassador to Namibia, Mr. Jean Louis Zoël observed this on 17 March 2009 when he officially opened the Francophonie Exhibition, which ran until 31 March 2009, at the Parliament of Namibia. The exhibition was part of the International Day of Francophonie which is celebrated annually on 20 March.

The French diplomat said although not being the most spoken language in the world, French was a global language shared in 56 countries in Europe, America, Asia; and Africa in particular where about half of the member-states of the African Union (AU) have it as an official language. It is indeed a language of the UN, the African Union and is also spoken in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region such as in Madagascar, Seychelles and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), thus making it a direct regional interest to Namibia. Ambassador Zoël added that French was also an official language for the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) which elected the Speaker of Namibia's National Assembly, Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab as its President in October 2008.

Ambassador Zoël pointed out that Francophonie was not only about having French as a common language, but also about the conscience of sharing both it and the culture it gave access to. He said Francophone was ideally community-based and viewed French as a language which conveyed a humanistic message (and) a set of values such as freedom, tolerance and


sharing. "Fortunately, Francophonie does not have a monopoly in these values and does not pretend to. But it expresses them in its own way, using its own intonations and variations," the Ambassador said.

At the cultural level, Ambassador Zoël explained, the francophone countries and institutions had been active at the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for the adoption in October 2005 of the Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions. Therefore, languages and cultures are part of mankind's common heritage. It is a wealth that we needed to protect, recognise, share and exchange; it is not a handicap. That is indeed one of the missions of the Franco-Namibia Cultural Centre (FNCC) for the benefit of Namibian and French cultures, the Ambassador stressed.

Speaking at the same occasion, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab welcomed the fact that the worldwide promotion of the French cultural and linguistic diversity was brought to the doorsteps of Parliament this year. "Arts, culture and intellectual thought remain a most important reservoir of any nation's identity particularly with regard to customs, music, works of art and traditions. As a collective expression, culture brings some very important values to our lives. It defines how

we interact with others, it promotes our spiritual values, it encourages our creativity, and, above all, it is the foundation of our own dignity, pride, identity and national character," Dr. Gurirab emphasised.

Dr. Gurirab added that arts and culture were not merely for entertainment but a response to humanity and individuality which helped to shape the people's identity. Thus, he said, such manifestations transcended artificial divides such as nationality, race and ethnicity. "This portrays a wonderful universality and potential to unite communities around our common humanity. All of us, with our different mother tongues, can speak in many languages but looking at these pictures we can understand the message without help of a translator. Thus, culture, music and sport do not discriminate, but can lift us all up to new heights of inspiration and excellence.

He concluded that culture was a desirable end in itself which played an important role in national development by allowing people to cultivate social creativity, by attaching value to many daily developmental challenges, and by promoting freedom and equality to decide what humanity considered constructive in life. The occasion was attended by Cabinet and Deputy Ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of the Diplomatic Corps and media practitioners. 



French Ambassador Mr. Jean Louis Zoël (right) and the Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab viewing French cultural exhibits at parliament

Face to Face with Southern Sudan Legislator

Parliamentarian and Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA), Hon. Dr. Jimmy Wongo, headed a six-man delegation on an exchange visit to the National Assembly from 26 April 2009 to 01 May 2009. In addition to the National Assembly, Dr. Wongo and his delegation met members of the Public Accounts Committee of the National Council, leaders from different political parties in the country, the Auditor-General; and officials from the Ministry of Finance and the Anti-Corruption Commission respectively. Parliament Journal caught up with Dr. Wongo to find out why his

delegation chose to include Parliament of Namibia on its exchange itinerary:

Hon. Dr. Wongo: I particularly chose to come to Namibia because we are in a similar situation with the Namibian people. We in the Southern Sudan have just come out of war about five years ago. Namibia similarly came out of war about twenty years ago. So I thought we have things in common – coming out of war and now being faced with the challenges of establishing a government and bringing about development in our countries.

So we thought Namibia is a place we can learn so much from because they came out of war, we have come out of war. In fact, true to that, we have now come to find out that we actually chose the right country. We can see democracy taking roots here. We can see development taking place. Freedom is reigning in Namibia. Therefore, we have a lot of things to learn from the Namibian people and

to copy at home when we go back.

PJ: What institutions did you visit during your stay and what is your impression?

Hon. Dr. Wongo: Because we are members of the Public Accounts Committee of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly, we particularly came as guests of the National Assembly of Namibia. In this institution, we have attended sessions of the Assembly discussing the budget; we have attended public hearings of the Public Accounts Committee; we have been interacting with people from different (political) parties of Namibia; we have seen how the administration of the Namibian Parliament is running; and we have met members of the Public Accounts Committee in the National Council. So, we learned so much from the parliament.

Outside the parliament, we interacted with the Auditor-General and his team;



Hon. Dr. Jimmy Wongo (centre) shaking hands with Hon. Johan de Waal, Chairman of the National Assembly's Public Accounts Committee. Other members of the SSLA delegation include Hon. John Peter Miskin (first left); Hon. David William Tut (3rd from left); Hon. Dr. Richard Mabruk Mulla (1st from right); Ms. Harriet Jarua Wilfred (Committee Clerk) and Hon. Adam Diyo Gorgi (3rd from right).

they explained to us how they work and how they relate to the Public Accounts Committee. We have been to the Ministry of Finance and they told us how they relate to the Auditor-General, and how they relate to parliament. This was very encouraging to us. We went to the Anti-Corruption Commission which is instituted here to fight corruption and to curb corruption, if any. We have listened to their explanation and how they are functioning. So, all these institutions that we have seen are very relevant. We have experienced the generosity and hospitality of the Namibian people and their government and parliament. We are all very thankful to the government and people of Namibia.

PJ: What specific areas of cooperation do you envisage between your parliament and that of Namibia?

Hon. Dr. Wongo: We envisaged a lot of things. Staff training; the staff of Parliament here are very well trained and, therefore, make the job of the committees very easy. Therefore, I think that is an area where we can even send our staff for attachment for a number of months so that they can learn some experience from their brothers and sisters in the Assembly and improve their performance when they come back to study in the universities here in Namibia. We think

we should revive cooperation in the area of education so that we can send students here on a scholarship.

PJ: What measures do you think should be implemented to make Public Accounts Committees in African Parliaments effective?

Hon. Dr. Wongo: The way I have seen your Public Accounts Committee operating is already very effective. It is for us to learn from your Public Accounts Committee, so that ours can also be very effective.

Brief Background of SSLA

The Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) came into existence under Art. 57 (1) of the 2005 Interim constitution of the Southern Sudan, as provided for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed between the Sudan Government and the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) in Naivasha, Kenya, on 9 January 2005. The SSLA is composed of 70 percent SPLM members, 15 percent National Congress Party (NCP) members. The other political parties make up 15 percent as stipulated by the CPA. The SSLA was inaugurated in October 2005 with 171 members drawn from eight political parties in the Sudan.

The SSLA exercises legislative functions; oversees the executive, and promotes a decentralized system of government in Southern Sudan. It is tasked with the responsibilities of enacting legislations on all matters assigned to it by the CPA, the Interim National Constitution and Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan.

The powers conferred upon the SSLA include discussions on all the statements made by the President; impeach the President and the Vice-President of the government of Southern Sudan, approves the annual budget, plans, programmes and policies of the government of Southern Sudan, including the allocation of resources and revenues.

The Assembly convenes twice in a year. The first session begins on Monday of the first week of March and ends on Wednesday of the last week of May. The second begins on Monday of the first week of September and ends on Wednesday of the last week of November. If need be, the Speaker of the Assembly, in consultation with the President of the government of Southern Sudan, may resolve to extend the duration of the session as mandated by the Conduct of Business of the Assembly (www.sslagoss.org/gallery.php).



Lawmakers from the Southern Sudan Legislature after discussions with members of the National Council Public Accounts Committee

IPU States Position on Gaza

At the end of two days of consultations with the Executive Committee meeting in extraordinary session, the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab had expressed concern over the deplorable situation in Gaza and the broader political crisis in the Middle East.

In a media release issued in Geneva on 30 January 2009, Dr. Gurirab, the Speaker of the National Assembly, recalled the paramount objective of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to establish peace in the region, with two States – Israel and Palestine – living side by side within secure and recognized borders. The media release reads as following:

The IPU firmly believes that the only way to achieve peace is through dialogue and negotiations, and never through the use of armed force and violence. We therefore call upon the parties to resume serious negotiations and reiterate our commitment to support all political initiatives to restart dialogue between the parties.

We support the legitimate government of Palestine and its elected parliament. We equally support efforts to unite the Palestinian people. It is imperative for them to speak with one voice as they move towards statehood.

We are outraged at the shocking loss of lives and destruction, including the bombings of United Nations premises and other manifestly civilian installations. We abhor all acts of violence against civilians, whoever perpetrates them.

It is imperative to alleviate the distress of the people of Gaza and attend to

their urgent humanitarian needs. For this to be possible, it will be necessary to ensure a secure environment, open border crossings and establish humanitarian corridors. Most importantly, we call on Israel to ensure that access to Gaza is predictable, regular and comprehensive.

The international community must be ready to fund immediate assistance and we urge all countries to respond promptly and generously to the appeal now being issued by the United Nations. Similarly, we call on the international community to provide sustained support for reconstruction in Gaza following the widespread destruction caused by the Israeli invasion. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) must receive the support it requires to fulfil its mandate throughout the region.

We support the efforts of the United Nations to bring peace and stability to the region and in particular Security Council Resolution 1860 (2009). We welcome the ceasefire that has been put in place and urge all parties to respect it. We insist that all parties abide by the rules of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and we believe that alleged violations of these rules during the recent fighting should be subject to an independent investigation that is acted upon.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union will assist the Parliament in Palestine to become a fully functional institution. It will also investigate possibilities for the rehabilitation of the Gaza Office of the Palestinian Legislative Council which was destroyed during the attacks. The IPU continues to call for the immediate release of the parliamentarians of the Palestinian Legislative Council who have been arbitrarily detained by the Israeli authorities.

We have discussed the need for an IPU fact-finding mission. In order to prepare for this, I will shortly be travelling to the region to consult with the Speakers of the Arab Parliaments and with the leaders of the Palestinian and Israeli Governments and Parliaments. I will report on these

consultations to the IPU Governing Bodies at their forthcoming session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

My second point concerns the global financial crisis. The Executive Committee has approved a set of proposals for the IPU to organize a parliamentary contribution to the efforts currently under way to address it.

The crisis has expanded beyond the world of finance and reached into the economies of all countries. The prospects for 2009 are bleak. Provisional ILO projections indicate that fifty million jobs or more may be lost. Some two hundred million workers, mostly in developing economies, could be pushed into extreme poverty. We stand at the brink of a crisis of enormous proportions with repercussions on our ability to produce enough food and alleviate human suffering.

I will shortly convene a group of members of parliament who have substantive expertise and experience of financial and economic policy, labour and social development issues, and food security and related areas. The group will prepare initial input to the work of the G20 and the United Nations. The IPU will also host and facilitate the work of the Commission of Experts set up by the United Nations General Assembly President on reforms of the international monetary and financial system when it meets in Geneva in early March.

The IPU will convene a global parliamentary conference on the crisis. The conference will promote an inclusive and comprehensive global response. It will seek improved global governance through greater parliamentary involvement. It will make every effort to see that the global response to the crisis is gender balanced and includes women in the decision-making processes.

In essence, the conference will make proposals to ensure that parliaments, individually and acting collectively through the IPU, can secure greater accountability and transparency on all of these issues.

My third point relates to climate change. The year 2009 is an important milestone in our collective efforts to tackle climate change. In December, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will meet in Copenhagen. With the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol set to expire in 2012, a new international framework has to be agreed and ratified. The Conference in Copenhagen will conclude a new agreement and set the terms for long-term global climate cooperation.

A successful conclusion of this process will require the support of parliaments everywhere. Their approval is essential to ratification of the agreement and its subsequent implementation. We will therefore continue our campaign to mobilize parliaments in support of a new and enforceable agreement on climate change. We will accompany the United Nations in this process and, together with the Danish Parliament; we will organize a meeting for the parliamentarians attending the Conference in Copenhagen.

Lastly, we have discussed several other matters, including IPU's cooperation with the United Nations. However, the principal purpose of this extraordinary session of the Executive Committee was to discuss possible IPU initiatives in the face of this latest crisis in the Middle East, particularly in Gaza.

We are acutely aware that peace in the Middle East can only come about through political dialogue and negotiation. However, it is only the representatives of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples who can set the terms of a comprehensive and lasting peace agreement. All countries, large or small, within or outside the region, must ultimately contribute to this effort and not seek to impose their own terms for peace. It is with this conviction that I look forward to leading the IPU's efforts in support of peace in the Middle East.

IPU President Tours Middle East



Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab

The President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Hon. Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, travelled to the Middle East on 28 February 2009 for a tour of the region. He started the visit in Sharm El-Sheikh where he held talks with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas.

President Gurirab attended the international conference in support of the Palestinian economy for the reconstruction of Gaza. He was received by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and several visiting dignitaries. The IPU President, who was accompanied by the Union's Secretary-General, Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, also visited Gaza and Ramallah on 3 and 5 March. Dr. Gurirab said he was "pleased to accept the invitation to visit Palestine and hold talks with President Abbas and the Palestinian leadership".

"I expect to learn of their efforts to unite the Palestinian people and to explore with them how best the IPU can be of assistance, including by way

of helping to build a strong Palestinian Parliament and rebuild its office in Gaza which was destroyed," he added.

The visit of Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab was part of the follow up of the recommendations formulated by the IPU Executive Committee at its recent extraordinary session in Geneva. The IPU President presented a report of his visit to the IPU Assembly which was held in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) from 5 to 10 April 2009.

During his mission, the IPU President also visited Egypt and Jordan for talks with the Speakers of Parliament of the two countries, Mr. Ahmed Fathy Sorour and Mr. Abdulhadi Al-Majali respectively, as well as with the Speaker of the Palestine National Council, Mr. Saleem Al-Za'noon. He concluded his tour of the region in Muscat (Oman), on 7 and 8 March, where he held talks with the Speakers of all the Arab Parliaments present at the Conference of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (www.ipu.org).

From the Chambers



SWAPO Party parliamentarian and Deputy Minister of Environment and Tourism, Hon. Leon Jooste has resigned as Deputy Minister and Member of the National Assembly respectively with effect from 19 January 2009. Hon. Jooste joined government in 2005 and has since served on various deputy ministerial portfolios. He cited personal reasons for his resignation.



Dr. Korbinian Viscaya Amutenya (right) has been sworn in as SWAPO Party Member of the National Assembly with effect from 11 March 2009. Dr. Amutenya replaces SWAPO Party MP, Hon. Leon Jooste who resigned from the National Assembly in January this year. Before his appointment, Dr. Amutenya was superintendent of the Oshakati State Hospital; and then personal physician to President Hifikepunye Pohamba, the position he held until his swearing-in as a politician. Chief Justice Peter Shivute (left) officiated at the swearing-in-ceremony in the Chamber of the National Assembly.

Staff on the Move



Mr. Johannes (Jakes) Jacobs has been promoted and appointed as Secretary to the National Assembly with effect from 5 January 2009. Mr. Jacobs joined the National Assembly in April 1996 as Director for Committee Services. He has been serving as Director for General Services at the National Assembly since 2001, the position he held until his promotion.

Mr. Reinhold Kalimbo Ipinge has been promoted to Chief Control Officer at the National Council with effect from 1 January 2009. Before his transfer to the National Council, Mr. Ipinge had been working for the Ministry of Health and Social Services as Control Officer since 2006.



Mr. Eliud Hamukoto Heita has been promoted to Senior Human Resources Practitioner at the National Council with effect from 1 January 2009. Before his promotion, Mr. Heita was working for the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry as Human Resource Practitioner since 2003.

Ms. Rosa //Garoës has been promoted to Chief Clerk at the National Assembly's Directorate of General Services with effect from 2 January 2009. Before her promotion, Ms. //Garoës had been working for the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry as Record Clerk since 1996 in the Directorate General Services.



Mr. Matti Amunime has been transferred from the Ministry of Safety and Security to the National Assembly with effect from 1 August 2008 as Human Resource Practitioner.

Staff on the Move

Mr. Natanael Amoomo has been promoted to Chief Internal Auditor at the National Council with effect from 1 March 2009. Since 2002 until his promotion, Mr. Amoomo had been working for the Office of the Auditor-General as an auditor.



Ms. Paulina Shipahu has been appointed as Assistant Librarian at the National Assembly's Directorate of Library and Computer Services with effect from 1 March 2009. Ms. Shipahu has just completed her Grade 12 at the Mweshipandeka High School in the Oshana Region.

Ms. Paula Kooper has been appointed as Secretary to the SWAPO Party Chief Whip with effect from May 2009.



Mr. Willy Shimbome has been transferred from the National Assembly to the Ministry of Trade and Industry as an Investment Promotion Officer with effect from April 2009.

Ms. Theresa Philemon, Senior Parliamentary Clerk has been seconded as Personal Assistant to the Minister of Trade and Industry with effect from 18th March 2009.



Obituary



Ms. Kanduu Hulda Katupose, “Kanduu” as she was affectionately known by close friends, died in a car accident between Witvlei and Gobabis on 1 February 2009. Kanduu was Private Secretary in the Office of the National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO) Party. Parliament Journal wishes the family and relatives of the late Kanduu strength during the dark moment of grief and bereavement. May her soul rest in eternal peace!

